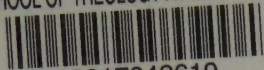
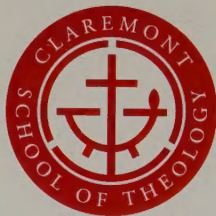


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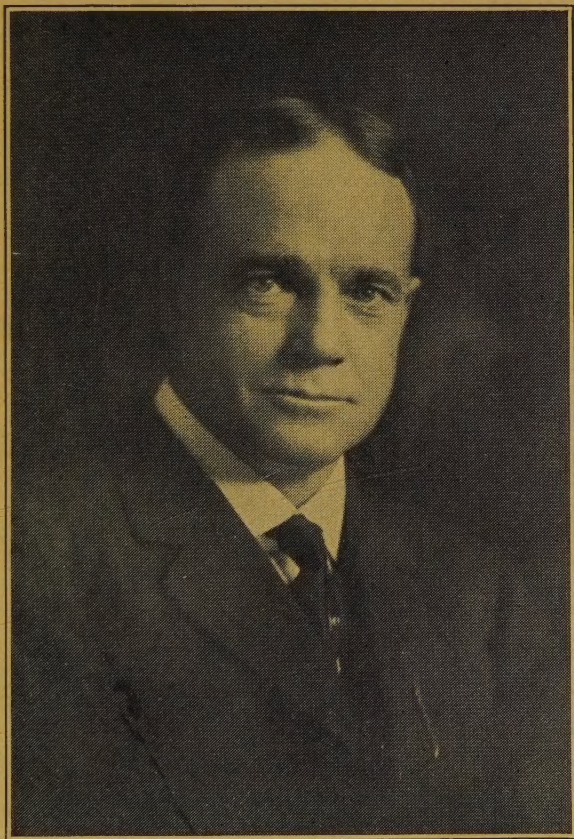


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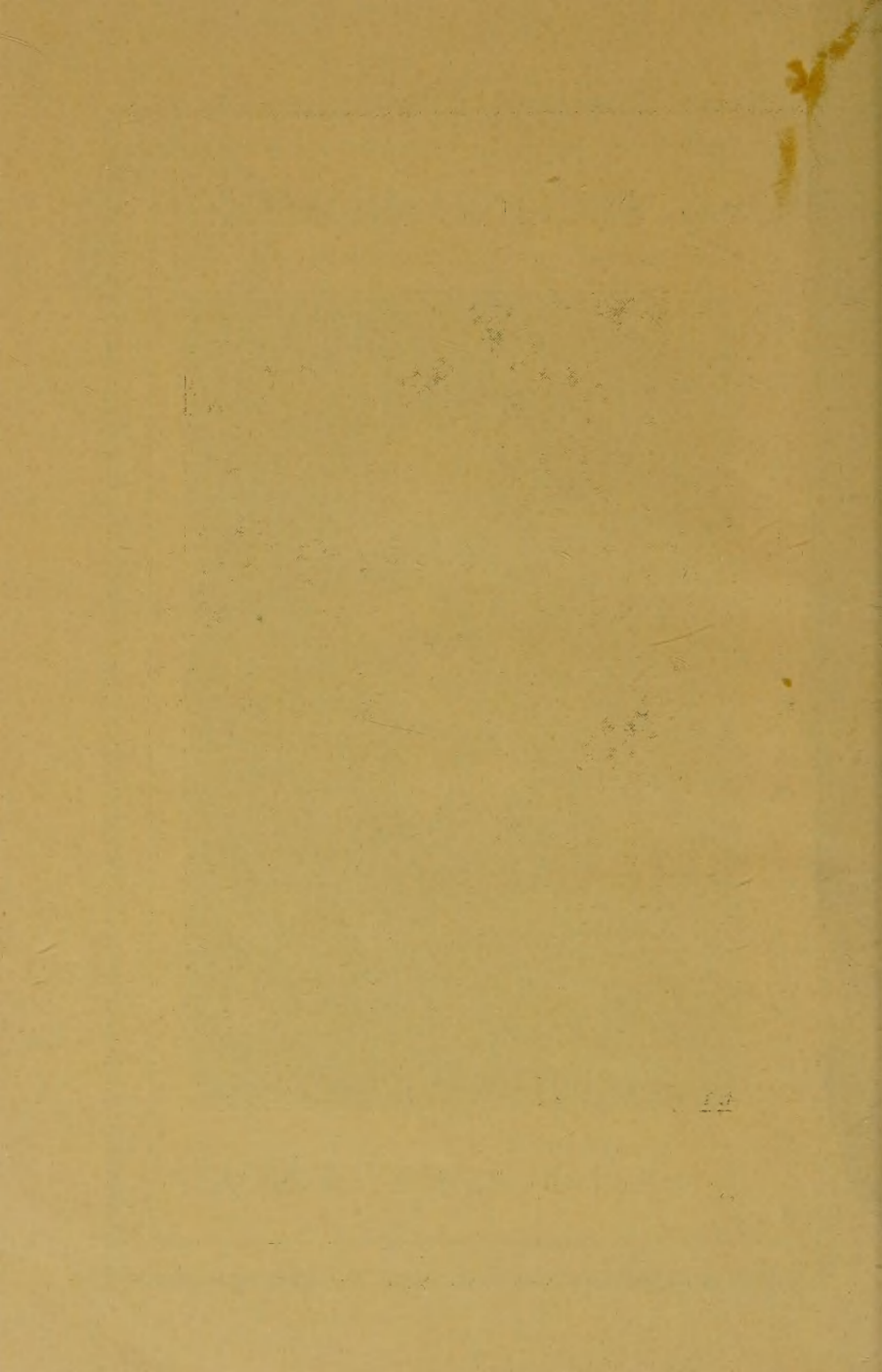
*The* SECOND COMING

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By WILLIAM ASHLEY SUNDAY





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# The Second Coming



By William Ashley Sunday

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# The Second Coming

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"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."—I Thes. 4:17-18.

The meeting here mentioned is to be the greatest meeting the Bible tells us anything about. There have been some wonderful meetings, but never has there been one to compare with this. It was a wonderful meeting the children of Israel had on the shore of the Red Sea, after Pharaoh's pursuing host had been destroyed in the angry waters, and Miriam, the prophetess, with her timbrel led the people in singing, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and rider hath He thrown into the sea." (Ex. 15:21). And it was another great meeting they had at the foot of Mount Sinai, when the law of God was given to them amid thunders and lightnings, and fire and smoke. That was a great meeting, too, on Mount Carmel, when Elijah, the sturdy Tishbite, defied the prophets of Baal; and that was a great meeting where David danced before the ark of God, as it was borne into Jerusalem. It was a great meeting when Solomon dedicated the temple, and the glory of the Lord came upon the people, and those were great meetings that were held on the banks of the Jordan, when Jerusalem and all Judea went out to hear the man who dressed in camel's hair and wore a linen girdle, and lived on locusts and wild honey. It was a wonderful meet-

ing when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, and another when He fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. And that was a great meeting on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came like a rushing, mighty wind, and under Peter's preaching about three thousand were converted.

All these were great meetings, and any number of others have been held, both in former times and in our own day. Those were great meetings in the early days of Methodism, when Wesley and Whitefield preached to great multitudes in the fields. Those were great meetings when multitudes were flocking to hear Finney and Moody; and great meetings have since been held by other great evangelists all around the world. But no meeting has ever been held anywhere or in any time that could begin to compare in importance with the greatest of all meetings that is to be held in the air, when our Lord comes to make up His jewels. That meeting is the one for which all others have been preparing the way. It will be the crowning meeting of all history. The purpose of all that has been done in this world up to the present time has been to prepare for that great meeting in the air.

From Adam mankind has been marching, step by step, up a grand stairway leading direct to that meeting in the air. The call of Abraham was one step toward it, and Jacob and his twelve sons were another. Joseph ruling in Egypt was another; the deliverance under Moses another; the conquest of Canaan under Joshua another, and so on with every event in sacred history. It was for this Jesus suffered on the cross to make atonement for sin. It was for this he arose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He took His place at the right hand of the Father. It was for this the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and it was for this that churches have



been organized and missionaries sent to the ends of the earth. These things have all been done to prepare the way, and lead up to the meeting which is so graphically described in the text.

It was for this meeting God made His plans before He laid the foundations of the earth, and it was of this meeting He was thinking before the morning stars sang together.

We are not told when Jesus will come, but we are told that His coming is sure, and we are charged to watch for it. Yet the church today shows as little concern about His coming again as His disciples did about his going away. All of this is fully in accord with Peter: "There shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of His coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning until now?"—II Peter 3:3-4.

Jesus not only foretold His going away, but charged His followers to expect His return, and be ready for it: "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."—Matt. 24:42-44.

Every time we lift the communion cup to our lips we "do show forth the Lord's death till He come." There is no prophecy needing to be fulfilled before Christ comes. Jesus said: "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; then shall the end come."—Matt. 24-14. There is not a nation on the face of the earth that has not had the Gospel preached within its bounds.

The second coming of Christ is the emphatic doctrine of the New Testament. It is mentioned and referred to more than three hundred and fifty times, and yet the majority of church members never heard

a sermon on the subject; that is the reason they think so little of looking into the matter themselves. The church makes much of baptism, but in all of Paul's epistles baptism is only mentioned or referred to thirteen times, while the return of the Lord is mentioned fifty times. This certainly shows which he considered the most important.

McCheyne, the great Scotch preacher, once said to some of his friends: "Do you think Christ will come back tonight?" One after another they said, "I think not"; then he solemnly repeated: "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."—Matt. 22: 42-44.

With such admonitions as this, what right have we to be unconcerned about it and say, as many preachers do, "It is nothing to me; I take no interest in the subject whatever." Who would care to travel on a train where the engineer would never read his orders? Who would ride on a ship where the captain never looked at the compass? You may call it rubbish, but the disciples called it the "blessed hope." "Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things I say?" If Jesus had said, "I will not return for two thousand years," nobody would have begun to look for Him before the time was near, but He expects His followers to be always looking for His return. Just as Simeon and Anna watched and waited for His first coming, so we should be watching and waiting for His return. It is not enough to say, "Oh, I'm a Christian; I'm all right." We are not all right unless we obey the command to watch, for it is certainly as much of a command to look for the coming of the Lord as it is to keep the Sabbath holy. Nothing else will do so much to keep us right where we should be in our religious experience. Knowing that

the bank examiner may drop in at any moment keeps many a cashier from becoming dishonest.

A little more than twenty years ago Mr. Moody called a convention of Christian workers to meet in Chicago, and that convention was in session there in Moody's Church for two months, and out of it came the great Bible Institute. The daily program was to spend the forenoon at the church in prayer and Bible study, and the afternoon and evening in doing practical Christian work. A man who was my assistant some years ago attended that convention. He told me that one day Mr. Moody asked him to go down among the anarchists, in the hard part of Chicago, and hold a meeting there. "Do the best you can," said Mr. Moody, "and some night I'll come down and help you." My friend said that promise was a continual incentive to him to keep up his courage and do his very best. He didn't know when Mr. Moody would come, and so he looked for him every night, and the harder time he had, the harder he hoped and looked. This shows how the constant expectation of the coming of Jesus will inspire and encourage us.

A great many say, "I believe the millennium will come first, then Christ will come at the end of it." What people think has nothing to do with it, but what God says has everything to do with it. Many have missed railroad trains because they believed they would come at a time that did not correspond with the official time card. You will see God's time card if you carefully read the Bible. Not a word can be found in the Bible that gives the slightest hope for the millennium before the return of Christ; but you can find plenty of verses that tell you to look for the coming of the Lord first.

As we look back over the two thousand years since Christ, how far we seem to be away from the



time when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. Every edition of the press seems to make it clear that the devil is still having his way. Look at the reign of wickedness in our great cities in both high life and low. No college has ever yet made a saint, or ever will. Education may improve conditions, but it can never change or cleanse the heart. Look at the lukewarmness and indifference in the churches everywhere, and see what many of them are compelled to resort to in order to keep from going under. See to what schemes and dodges and foolishness some preachers have to resort to to get anybody to go and hear them.

There can be no millennium until Jesus comes; it is His presence that makes the millennium. You might as well talk of daylight not coming until the sun goes down. The millennium cannot begin until Satan has been bound in the pit. Nothing is more certain than that the glory of God shall cover the earth, but it will be after Jesus comes.

Many have an idea the world will grow better and better until the coming of the millennium, and everybody will be converted, and you hear that stuff preached, but the Bible does not teach any such trash.

On the day before the flood there were no doubt many people who were sincere in thinking that the world was growing better, and yet it was so hopelessly wicked that God had to destroy it. Some of the men who married into the family of Lot may have made the same claim for Sodom, only a day or two before its destruction; no doubt Lot's wife was of the same opinion. On the day before the crucifixion there were men in Jerusalem who undoubtedly agreed with each other that the world was growing better. The world will grow worse and worse. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were



given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:27-30.) Lawlessness, vice and crime will increase; communism, nihilism, anarchy, adultery, divorce, graft, all will continue to grow until they will finally ripen into the anti-Christ.

Many think and preach that the millennium will be brought about by the increase of knowledge, culture, great discoveries, such as the gasoline engine, automobile, electricity, radium, liquified air, wireless telegraphy, airships, etc. These have nothing to do with bringing the millennium. It is the personal reign of Christ that brings the millennium. Those who have been the greatest blessing to the world were filled with this hope—and preached it.

The word of God was vitiated and neutralized by the traditions of men when Jesus first came, and that is very largely the trouble in present times. Instead of going to the Bible to find out what God says, the preacher is too apt to go to his books, to see what the great men of his church have to say about it, and all their preaching and teaching takes its color from the glasses the rabbis wear, just as was the case in the time of Jesus. The fact that Jesus was not recognized by the high-up authorities, but was rejected and crucified as an imposter, shows what a dangerous and deadly thing it is to accept the traditions of men rather than what God says about things. Too many, who are now masters in Israel are as much in the dark as Nicodemus was. The truth is no harder to get at than corn on the cob, if we will first

strip off the husk and shell it. We need to depend more upon the Holy Spirit and less upon our libraries if we would preach so that those who hear us will also hear the voice of God in our message. It is not what Doctor This or Professor That has to say about it that settles the question, and settles it right, but how reads the Word? What does the Bible say about it? And what we need to do is to take the Bible as it reads, not as some big man says it means. Big men have been mistaken about vital things just as often as little ones. The safest pilot is not the one who wears the biggest hat, but the one who knows the channel the best. We should let the Bible speak to us just as God means it should, without distorting it by the prejudices and vagaries of those who are always trying to put their own camel into it and strain out somebody else's gnat.

It is high time for Christians to interpret unfulfilled prophecies by the light of prophecies already fulfilled. The curses on the Jews were brought to pass literally; so also will be the blessings. The scattering was literal; so also will be the gathering. The pulling down of Zion was literal; so also must be the building up. The rejection of Israel was literal; and so also must be the restoration. The first coming of Christ was literal, visible and personal, and what right has anybody to conclude that His second coming will be altogether spiritual? If His first advent was with a real body, why not the same with His second coming?

When Jesus first came, the smallest predictions were fulfilled to the very letter; and should this not teach us to expect that the same will be true when He comes again? There are very many more prophecies concerning His second coming than His first, and does this mean that God wants to give us the most favorable opportunity possible to prepare for it? If

the humility and shame of Christ at His first coming was literal and visible, should not His coming in power and glory be also literal and visible?

What right have we to say that the words Judah, Zion, Israel and Jerusalem ever mean anything but literal Judah, Zion, Israel and Jerusalem? Some one has called attention to the fact that there are only two or three places in the whole New Testament where such names are used in what may be called a spiritual or figurative way. Jerusalem occurs eighty times, and in every case is unquestionably literal, except when the opposite is clearly indicated by such qualifying terms as "heavenly," "new," or "holy." Jew occurs a hundred times, and only four are even ambiguous. Israel and Israelite occur forty times, and all literal. Judah and Judea about twenty times, and literal in every case.

John Bunyan was once studying the passages foretelling that the feet of the Lord should stand on the Mount of Olives, and he thus reasoned: "Some commentators say that the Mount of Olives means the heart of the believer; that it is only a figurative expression, and means that the Lord will reign in the heart of the believer, and the Holy Spirit will dwell there. But I don't think it means that at all. I just think it means the Mount of Olives, two miles from Jerusalem, on the east." And that is why the Lord could use the poor tinker so marvelously, even when he was shut up in Bedford jail.

While face to face with them, Jesus taught his disciples to be in constant expectation of His early return, and they so understood Him and lived accordingly. They preached the doctrine and taught it in their epistles, every one of them. Certainly, if anybody ever understood the Lord correctly, it was the men whom He personally trained to do that very thing, that they might hand the truth He gave them

down to us. If they failed to understand Him, what hope is there that anybody else may do so?

Jesus is going to come and reveal himself to the members of His body at the very moment when the last soul is saved necessary to complete that body—for the body of Christ must consist of a certain number of souls, or it never could be completed. If it were an infinite number it would be an endless task, and Jesus would never return, for He can no more come without His heavenly body than He could come the first time without a human body. It is the completion of the body of Christ, therefore, that will bring Him, and this shows how we may help and hasten His coming. "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." (II Peter 3:12).

Every time we do personal work or try to get anybody saved, we may be doing something that will bring the coming of the Lord. Instead of being discouraged by looking about us and seeing what a small prospect there is of the whole world being converted, it will set our bones on fire to think that perhaps the last man needed to complete the Lord's body and bring Jesus back to earth may be converted this very day. That gives us something definite and tangible to work for, and hope for, don't you see?

Colonel Clark, the founder of the Pacific Garden Mission, in Chicago, put in six nights out of every seven at the mission as long as he lived. One day somebody said to him:

"Colonel, why don't you take some rest? You are killing yourself by sticking to that mission so close. Why don't you take a vacation and go away somewhere and rest?"

"I can't do it, brother," answered the Colonel



"I could never do that, for every time I start for the mission I think, maybe, that last man may be saved in our little meeting tonight, and the Lord will come; and I wouldn't miss being at my post for anything in the world. When Jesus comes I want to be right where He expects me to be."

The Bible very clearly makes known the great truth that God's purpose for this dispensation is the completing of the body of Christ. He is not trying to save the world now; that is to be the work of the next dispensation. Here is the Scripture for it:

"God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. (The body of Christ). And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David (the Jewish nation) which is fallen down (scattered and no longer being used); and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord." (Through their missionary efforts).—Acts 15:14-17.

That is the present dispensation, and that is what God is doing now. There is nothing said here about the conversion of the world, but it is made clear that a people is being chosen, and much Scripture might be quoted to show that the people so referred to, will constitute the body of Christ. Throughout this dispensation the Lord has been working among the Gentiles (those not belonging to the Jewish nation), and the above shows the purpose for which he has been working. There is no thought expressed there of the millennium.

"And to this agree the words of the prophets about God's purpose in gathering a chosen people from the Gentiles. As it is written (and that means what God says). After this (after the number of people to be chosen from the Gentiles has been fully

completed) I will return (to direct dealing with Israel) and build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down."—Acts 15:15-16.

"Fallen down." What does that mean? What does it mean for a house to be fallen down? Certainly that it cannot longer be used as a house while in that condition. Read the prophecy of Amos, from which this is taken, and see why it is that God is through with Israel until He has taken from the Gentiles the people for His name. (To bear His name, to glorify His name)..

The mission of the church—the bride of Christ, or body of Christ—is to get ready to meet the Bridegroom. When the body of Christ is completed, He will reveal Himself to the members who are alive and in this world at that time, and at the same moment they will be caught up to meet those who have gone on before in the air, and from that moment they are forever with the Lord.

The body of Christ will be composed of believers from every race and nation on earth. That is why the Gospel must first be preached as a witness to every nation. Not from every dispensation. It had its beginning on the day of Pentecost and will be completed at the time of the meeting in the air, which is called the Rapture. For He is now preparing, perfecting and completing the church—the body of Christ, the bride who is to meet the Lord in the air, and be with Him forevermore.

These different members will be found, one here and another there, and gathered together from all parts of the world, and the moment the last one is saved Christ will be revealed—not to the world, but to His church—His bride—just as the electric light blazes out, when the last condition is fulfilled. At that time Christ will not be revealed to the whole world, but only to the individual members of His

body who may be alive and here at that time.

There remains no prophecy to be fulfilled. There is not a nation where the Gospel has not been preached. So Christ must be waiting for the completion of the body of believers. When the Rapture comes it will come in the twinkling of an eye. Those who have died in the Lord will be resurrected, and they, with the believers who are alive, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

When the Rapture comes it will come in the twinkling of an eye, and will be altogether unexpected except by those who have been searching the prophecies and are looking for it, just as Simeon and Anna and the wise men were looking for Jesus at His first coming. After it has occurred there will be an army of church members and preachers who will not know that it has come, because they are not members of the Lord's body; for the Lord will not at that time be seen by any except those who have been caught up to meet Him in the air. The remainder of the world will not know that He has been here, and they will not know what has become of the missing ones. They will seem to have disappeared in all kinds of unaccountable ways, unless their earthly bodies shall be left behind them, as the linen clothes of Jesus were left in the tomb. But things will soon settle back into their old condition, and the world go on its way, as did Sodom after Lot was taken out of it.

The notion that people have about the second coming of Christ is that when He comes the judgment day will also come, and that the world will come to an end. This idea is unscriptural and shows how little the Bible has been searched to find and make known the real truth by those who are leaders and teachers in the church. Business will go on and governments will go on as now. After Jesus comes

and takes the believers out of the world, then takes place the great tribulation, a description of which you will find later on. At the close of the tribulation the Lord will return, bringing with Him His saintly members of His body, to begin His millennium reign. Then He will reveal Himself to the Jews. They will accept Him as their long-rejected Messiah. Then the millennium will begin; the devil will be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years; nations will be born in a day, through the missionary efforts of the Jews.

The Jews have always been full of energy in business, as no other people, and when they become ambassadors for Christ there will be no lukewarmness or indifference. Either before or during the tribulation the Jews will have been restored to the Holy Land, rebuilding their temple and restoring the Jewish worship. Also during the tribulation the anti-Christ will come, most likely in the person of some great king. It is supposed that he will be a personal incarnation of the devil, just as Jesus was an incarnation of God. He will go to Jerusalem, and there do great signs and wonders, by which he will so delude the chosen people that they will accept him as their Messiah, and pay him divine honors in the temple. It will be during this that Jesus will return and destroy him by the brightness of His coming.

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”—II Thes. 2:8-9.

In the Lord's coming there are to be two distinct phases—His coming for the members of His body, and revelation to them at the time of the Rapture, or taking up into the air, and His coming with the mem-



bers of His body, at the close of the tribulation, when He is revealed to the Jews and destroys the anti-Christ. Overlooking these two phases has put some people in confusion about the order of events, just as the failure to distinguish between the prophecies pertaining to the first and second coming confused the Jews, and caused them to reject Jesus, through what they supposed to be His failure to fulfill prophecy.

The visible church will be left here, strong in members and organization. It will probably make a great show of missionary activity, but will have no more power against the principalities and powers of evil than did the disciples, who missed the Mount of Transfiguration, over the demons that were tormenting the little boy. In a worldly way it will appear to be a very prosperous condition, rich in property and elegant buildings; but here is a picture of what it will be after the salt of the earth has been taken out of it:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection; truce breakers, false accusers; incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good; traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof."—II Tim. 3:1-5.

Bear in mind that this has no reference to the Turks, the heathen in Africa, or the people in the slums; but that it is a description of the rank and file of the church, after the Lord has come and taken His body out of the world. For notice, that it is said that these people have a form of godliness, which means that they are professors of religion. They are not avowed infidels or atheists, but professed believers.

Let us consider, in the first place, something of what it may mean to have a part in that meeting in the air:

1. Well, the most glorious thing about it is that if we are there we shall be members of the body of Jesus Christ. It will mean that we are members of the royal family of the universe; that we are kings and princes who are to sit on the throne and reign with Jesus, and that we shall be with Him forevermore, never to be separated from Him again. And this will mean that we shall be the most exalted beings in all the universe, for who could be higher than the sons of God, or the bride of our Lord? In talking to men God must of course use the language of men, but He can only put into our words just a little of what He would tell us. A very little looking into the matter, however, will show that He has used the most expressive words in our language to show how near and precious is to be our relationship to Him. In fact, He has used about all the words we have that could be used for that purpose, as "members of His body," His "bride," and "sons of God."

If we are so fortunate as to have a part in that meeting in the air, it will mean that we are among the most fortunate of all the sons of men, and that we have lived in the most blessed of all times for men to live, for only those are eligible to membership in the body of Christ who live in the present dispensation. Moses and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah had no such chance as we have, for the body of Christ had its beginning at Pentecost. Neither will those who live after the Rapture have an opportunity for the body will then be completed and the door closed forever, as it was in the faces of the foolish virgins. Jesus said of John the Baptist that he was the greatest of all the prophets, but that the least in the kingdom of God was greater than he.

What an awful thing it would be, then, to have such a glorious opportunity and miss it. Others will know the joys of great salvation, for the world will be saved during the millennium (The next dispensation), and the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, but the people of that day will have no place in the body of Christ; they cannot become members of the royal family. They will be loyal subjects of the King. That is why Paul could say: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:16). There is a vast difference between a son of King George and a subject of Great Britain. The smallest babe of royal blood is greater than the greatest man in the kingdom.

2. If we have a place in that meeting in the air, it will mean that we are like Christ, for "when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The true child of God is always longing to be like his Master, and this heart yearning is the sure prophecy of what we shall then be. It will also mean that we shall nevermore be separated from Him. The devil will never again have power to separate us from Him for a single moment, and wherever He is, there shall we be also. The fact that Jesus is to be here during the millennium would be proof conclusive that we shall be here with Him; even if there were no other Scripture for it.

3. For some that meeting will mean that they reached it without having to pass through death, for it is to be composed of those who have gone on before, and those who are still living at that time. Some who are born into this world are never to die, and we may hope to be of that elect number. The Christian has no business to be looking for death. It is his right to hope to live forever, and instead of ex-

pecting to go to the grave, he should be looking for the coming of his Lord, and the meeting in the air.

4. It will also mean that we shall then have bodies that will remain young forever. Pains and aches, gray hair, wrinkles and feebleness will never again be known. Listen to this:

"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (no longer subject to age or decay), and we shall be changed" (into His likeness).—I Cor. 15:51-52.

And it will come in the twinkling of an eye—in a moment—and that moment will be what all time was made for. In that moment some will give up old age to be young forever. Others will go from beds of pain upon which they may have lain prostrate for years. Others, from the most grinding poverty, will spring to eternal wealth. Some will go from burdens from which they expected no relief save death. From what tribulations and troubles and afflictions will not that moment be a deliverance, and how the angels will begin to crowd the battlements of Heaven upon that glad meeting when they know it is about to come! In a moment! In the twinkling of an eye! "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," ought to be the daily prayer of every Christian heart. And yet as we look about us now, and see how the devil seems to be having his way as much as ever, it looks as if that great time would never come. But you can't tell by appearances. An hour before the tidal wave comes there is nothing to indicate that it will ever come. Nobody dreamed of an earthquake ten minutes before San Francisco began to rock and tumble. Some time ago the president touched a golden key in the White House, and in a moment, in the twink-



ling of an eye, the acres of machinery at the great Seattle Exposition, on the other side of the country, were in motion, and countless flags began to fly in the breeze; and that's the way the Lord will come. Just that quick! Quicker than a clock can tick! Quicker than lightning can flash! Ten minutes before the president touched the golden key it looked as if the machinery would never start, but when the right moment arrived it was going. "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." God's clock is never behind the smallest fraction of a second.

All signs point to the great event, some of which seem to me to be:

(a) Radical tendency to depart from the Christian faith.

(b) Prophecies fulfilled—the Gospel has been preached in every nation.

(c) The world-wide expectancy of His coming.

(d) Revival among the Jews. They are flocking to Jerusalem.

(e) The political unrest.

(f) Extreme views on questions of government.

(g) Concentration of wealth in the hands of the few.

5. If we have a part in that meeting, it will mean that we shall be here in this world with the Lord during the millennium—a thousand years—with the devil chained and cast out—not a saloon, gambling hell or brothel in the world, and everything just as we want it. Hear this:

"And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loose a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat

upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received His mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."—Rev. 20:3-6.

6. To have a part in that meeting will be to meet those who have gone on before—fathers and mothers and other loved ones. Think of how glorious and blessed that will be, and there will doubtless be infinite surprises that the Lord will have in store for us. "For it hath not entered into the heart of man the things that the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him."

7. Think of the delight of meeting and continuing with the other members of the Lord's body, who will then be as dear to us as the apple of our own eye. Think of being intimate with Peter, James and John, Andrew, Phillip and the others, and of hearing from them again and again all the incidents they witnessed in the life of Jesus. Think of being more intimate with Paul and Silas and Mark and Luke and Timothy, and the saints who were in Caesar's household, than we are with our very best friends now. Think of knowing Mary, the mother of Jesus, as well as you know your own mother, and of having for intimate friends, Martha and Mary and Lazarus of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene, and the unknown disciples who on the first Easter morning walked with their risen Lord on the way to Emmaus! Think

of talking with Zaccheus and Blind Bartimeus, the daughter of Jairus, and the wild man out of whom the legion of devils were cast. And the blind man in the ninth chapter of John—how good it will be to shake hands with him and tell him some of the good things we have so often thought about his courage. And Joseph of Aramathea, Nicodemus and the boy who had the five loaves and two fishes. And the blind woman who touched the hem of His garment; the widow who gave the two mites, and the Philippian jailor who got the old time religion in an unmistakable way; the first leper who was cleansed, and all the rest. How much we shall miss, if we miss that meeting in the air.

8. Think of how glorious it will be to live for a thousand years in this world with our blessed Master, and be closely associated with Him; with bodies that will not wear out or grow old, always in perfect health, and with faculties for enjoyment a thousand times higher than we possess now. The millennium will be the greatest time ever known, for it will be the golden age of man. Poverty, sickness, war and pestilence will be unknown. There will be no devil to cause human suffering and woe.

Then think of the delight of coming back into this world, where we have had so much trouble and hardship and poverty and sickness, to live under such glorious circumstances as will then prevail. A man told a friend of mine that when a boy, he footed it for nearly a hundred miles over the old National Road. It was in August, the weather hot and dusty, and the boy penniless, homeless and disheartened. He had on a pair of cowhide shoes, and his feet became so sore than over much of the way he could only hobble along in great pain. A little while ago he went over the same road in an elegant automobile, and he never so enjoyed a ride in his life. The

weather was fine and he had nothing to do but sit there and drink in the beauty of the day, and think of how much better off he was than when he went limping over that same road, a poor, helpless, sore-footed boy. Well, it will be something like that with us in the millennium, perhaps, only vastly more glorious when we come back to have a good time here.

9. It will also mean to be richly rewarded for all we have ever done or suffered for the Lord. Near the close of his hard and strenuous life Paul said:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all of them also that love His appearing."—Tim. 4:8.

Here are other verses showing there is to be a reward:

"And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."—I Pet. 5:4. "And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be."—Rev. 22:12.

10. If we have a part in that meeting we shall escape the great tribulation which is to come upon all the earth as soon as the members of the body of Christ are taken out of the world. The body of Christ is now the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is the army with which God now holds in check the principalities and powers of evil. It is therefore evident that when this army is taken out of the world, the devil will have unhindered sway, and will immediately begin to make this world as much like hell as he wants it to be. In speaking of this awful time Jesus said:

"Then shall the great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be



shortened, there shall no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."—Matt. 24:21-22.

And here is what Daniel says of it:

"And there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that time, and at that time thy people shall be delivered (members of the Lord's body), every one that shall be found written in the Book."—Dan. 12:1.

Human imagination is incapable of picturing the awfulness of this great tribulation, that is surely coming on the world, and may begin this very day—yes, even this very hour! Think of it! It is to be the worst time the world has ever known or ever will know. A worse time than the flood; a worse time than the bondage of Egypt, and a worse time than the destruction of Jerusalem, when women and children were torn in pieces, and the very name of mercy was unknown. A worse time than the reign of Nero; worse than during the Spanish inquisition; worse than when Cortez destroyed the Aztecs; worse than during the French Revolution and the Commune, and worse than during the Dark Ages. A worse time than when men were skinned alive; worse than when they were pulled asunder by horses; worse than when men, women and children were thrown to hungry lions, and worse than when they were dipped in pitch and burned as torches.

Do you want to live in that kind of a time? Well, the only thing that can surely save you from it is to have a part in that meeting in the air, for no others who are living at that time can escape it, and that awful time may be upon us within the next ten minutes, for it will begin at the very moment the Rapture takes place. There is now not a single prophecy remaining to be fulfilled before the Lord may come, and the members of His body be caught up to

meet Him in the air.

It stands to reason that the tribulation must be the most awful time known, because for the only time in all history the devil will then be loose and have unhindered sway. Everything he can do that will add to human woe will certainly be done. Governments will go to pieces, and there will be no security of life and property. A man may be a millionaire one day and a beggar the next. A very chaos of crime and outrage of every kind will be turned loose. God will let the world and the universe see for a time what it will mean to live under the devil's rule, and will let those who pass through the tribulation see that the good they so long enjoyed was because of the presence of the good. Some of you people who throw your votes and influence in favor of whiskey and all kinds of hellishness that go with it may live to find out in the bitterness of the tribulation just what is meant by sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind.

It is supposed that the tribulation will cover a period of seven years. It might be seven hundred years; but it cannot be less than seven years. God in His mercy will make it as short as possible. That the real church of God, believers, members of the body of Christ, are to be taken out of the world before the world is saved, is as clearly taught in the Bible as that through the atonement made by Christ man may have salvation from sin.

What will it mean to the world? Every believer will be instantly taken out of the world; homes will be rent in twain, husbands will be robbed of godly wives, children will be taken out of the world and those left behind will wring their hands in grief. No doubt newspapers will print extra editions. Universal consternation will reign. The world will neither see the Lord, **neither will they see their loved ones go.** Those who have died in the faith will be raised.

The statement of Jesus shows that not all the people are to be caught up in the air in clouds, but one here and there:

"There shall be two men in one bed; one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left."—Luke 17:34-36.

This makes it look as if the number caught up in the air would not be large. When will the meeting in the air occur? In regard to this Jesus said:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven—neither the Son but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."—Mark 13:32-33.

But He also said, after speaking of conditions that would prevail about that time:

"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door."—Matt. 24:33.

Will the world come to an end when Jesus comes and takes away the members of his body? No, not for at least one thousand years; perhaps longer. The millennium must come after Jesus comes, and must have its beginning at the close of the great tribulation.

The real truth is, that great event will not bring destruction to anything that is good, but will, on the contrary, introduce an era of the greatest progress and prosperity the world has ever known. The coming of Christ will bring the millennium—the golden age of man in this world—when the arts and sciences, and everything else that man ought to delight in, will flourish as never before, and never until Jesus comes will the knowledge of the glory of God cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. To say that the second coming of Christ is a pernicious thing

to preach is the same as saying it would be a calamity for God to rule. It will be the culmination of the redemption of this world, and to say that it would put an end to all progress is as foolish as to say that putting a roof on a house would ruin it and throw the carpenters out of work.

There is nothing more clearly declared in the Bible than that Christ will come and reign on earth during the millennium, when all will be restored that was lost by the fall. Then, and only then, will God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The scribes and pharisees thought that business was going to be endangered by Christ's first coming. The only business that will be hurt by the second coming of Christ will be the devil's business. At the time of His coming there will be no general resurrection or judgment.

At the close of the millennium reign of Christ the devil will be loosed out of the pit for a season, and look for the first time upon a world without sin. He will tempt people. They will be as foolish as now and yield to his lies and subtlety. He will gather his host and come against the saints to battle. Fire will fall from heaven and consume them. Then takes place the resurrection of the wicked dead. Then the judgment of the great white throne, with Christ to judge.

There is this about it, however: We are living nearer to it than anybody ever lived before, and when it does come, it is going to come in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—and the only safe course for us to pursue is to be ready for the Bridegroom when He comes.

"Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left His house and gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work,



and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch."—Mark 13:33-36.

We are not told when Jesus will come, but we are told that His coming is sure, and we are charged to watch for it. How it would affect our lives, and make hard things easy to bear, if we would only do this, and always be doing this. Don't you know how eagerly you get ready for company that you love, when you receive a telegram saying that they are surely coming? How you clean house and want to have everything in the very best of order! If we were continually looking for the coming of Jesus we would be as careful to keep our lives as clean as you would be to have your homes clean if you were expecting company. The certainty of His coming would also be a constant source of comfort and inspiration to us, if we believed it to be near.

The Lord does not come to the world at the time of the Rapture, but only reveals Himself to the members of His body. At the time of His resurrection He was only seen by those who believed on Him. Pilate and the high priest, and those who crucified Him, did not know that He was risen. So it will be at the time of the Rapture. The world will not know that He has been here, and will have no knowledge of Him, until He comes with the members of His body, at the close of the tribulation.

What an awful thing, then, to have the glorious privilege of living in this dispensation, with all that it means and miss getting into the body of Christ by refusing to become a Christian. The preacher owes it to his people to look into these things, that he may show them their great privilege, and warn them of

the awful things that may come upon them, if they miss their chance and have to go through the great tribulation. The preacher who has never qualified himself to preach a sermon on the sure and certain coming of his Master, will have to answer for an awful breach of trust when he stands before Him.

Our fleet of battleships made its remarkable trip around the Horn and around the world, and again dropped anchor at home on schedule time, almost to the minute, in spite of storm and the fickleness of wind and wave, and if the calculations of men can be wrought out so precisely, certainly we have the right to expect that God will execute His plans with absolute precision in whatever task He sets for Himself. Certainly we can think of nothing so improbable as that He would complete His program for creation on schedule time, and yet would so tie His own hands by failure to anticipate and provide for all possible emergencies and contingencies that the train of His purpose for redemption would be so delayed or nearly wrecked that it would almost have to be abandoned. Do not think it for a moment. God's purpose can no more be kept back a minute than the heavenly bodies can be delayed a minute. In redemption God is working by the clock as surely as in creation, and His chariot of salvation is not marked late a single minute.

"COME, LORD JESUS!"

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